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HD **Climate, pandemic and economy on the agenda as Biden and Trudeau meet Tuesday in effort to renew ties**

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Justin Trudeau and Joe Biden are aiming to reset their countries' alliance in a virtual meeting this week, replacing the acrimony of the Trump era with co-operation on climate change and trade.

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But the Prime Minister has so far been stymied by the U.S. President on major bilateral files - including access to COVID-19 vaccine supplies and the Keystone XL pipeline. That raises questions about whether Mr. Trudeau's friendly relationship with the new administration can deliver tangible benefits for Canada.

The pair will meet via videoconference Tuesday, along with members of their cabinets. The sit-down, Mr. Biden's first bilateral with a world leader since taking office last month, is an opportunity for him to make good on promises to restore the U.S.'s stature in the world by mending fences with allies.

Mr. Trudeau, meanwhile, will be looking for the U.S. to grant Ottawa an exemption to stricter Buy American rules, and help secure the release of two Canadians detained in China.

"Canada and the U.S. share one of the strongest and deepest friendships between any two countries in the world," the Prime Minister tweeted at the President in announcing the meeting. Mr. Biden wrote in response that he would be "renewing the strong friendship" between the two countries.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the meeting would cover the COVID-19 response, climate change and the economy.

Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Biden, cut from the same centre-left ideological cloth, have gotten along well in the past. During a trip to Canada in late 2016, the then-vice-president told the Prime Minister that the world would be "looking to you" amid the nationalism and isolationism represented by Donald Trump. Mr. Trudeau was the first leader to speak with Mr. Biden after his inauguration.

That closeness, however, has not delivered Mr. Trudeau significant victories in the opening days of the new administration.

Mr. Biden has maintained Mr. Trump's policy of reserving all U.S.-produced doses of the Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines for use in the United States. This meant Canada could not import shots from plants in Michigan and New Hampshire as its European supply slowed to a trickle in recent weeks.

The President also apparently did not give the Prime Minister a heads-up that he planned to cancel the Keystone XL pipeline on his first day in office. The Canadian government only learned of Mr. Biden's plans when they leaked in the media a few days before he signed the order.

Maryscott Greenwood, CEO of the Canadian-American Business Council, said it was still unclear whether the easing of crossborder tensions after Mr. Trump's exit would lead to better results for Canada.

"For sure, things will be a lot better - but does that translate into meaningful policy that advances Canada's interest? That's the rub," she said in an interview. "Is there an intention at the top, between Biden and Congress, to collaborate with Canada? And will Canada return to first among equals ... or just a very good friend?"

In the immediate term, Mr. Trudeau will want Mr. Biden to help secure the release of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor, the Canadians detained for more than two years by China in apparent retaliation for Canada serving a U.S. arrest warrant on Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou. This could entail the U.S. trying to put pressure on China to let the men go, or negotiating their release as part of a deal to resolve Ms. Meng's case.

The Prime Minister will also want the President to exempt Canadian companies from higher U.S. content thresholds for government contracts announced last month.

The pair are expected to align their countries in pushing for tougher greenhouse-gas-reduction targets ahead of a climate summit in Glasgow later this year, and discuss ways to co-operate in fighting the pandemic.

Kellie Meiman Hock, an international trade consultant at McLarty Associates in Washington, said that, on issues such as Keystone and vaccines, there were larger imperatives for Mr. Biden than pleasing an ally.

"When you look at the overwhelming support of Biden's base for climate action, that's such a huge mandate for him, it will supersede just about any other calculus when interacting with other countries," she said.

But despite disagreements over specific issues, Ms. Meiman Hock contended, the relationship between the two countries will improve simply by having a President who will settle bilateral disputes by negotiation rather than threats.

Mr. Trump slapped tariffs on Canadian-made steel and aluminum, triggering a continental trade war. He caused uncertainty for business by repeatedly threatening a unilateral end to free trade between the two countries. And he publicly berated Mr. Trudeau, once accusing the Prime Minister of being "very dishonest & weak" after a G7 summit in Quebec.

"Donald Trump did more damage to the U.S.-Canada relationship than any president in the history of the country," said Bruce Heyman, a U.S. ambassador to Canada during the Obama administration. "[Now] is a set of opportunities to get back to a more normalized relationship between two friends, allies, partners."

Christopher Sands, director of the Canada Institute at the Wilson Center think tank in Washington, said there is a lot of opportunity for Mr. Trudeau to gain from Mr. Biden's administration. The President's promised trillions in green infrastructure spending, including light-rail lines and electric-vehicle charging stations, could be a boon to Canadian manufacturers. And he is likely to be more amenable to a deal with Ms. Meng that would also see the two Michaels freed.

But Mr. Biden's narrow control of Congress means he will often have to prioritize domestic politics over international relations.

"The Biden administration is in a very weak position, even if we assume Biden wants to do nice things for Canada," Mr. Sands said. "If we see meetings this week that are long on rhetoric and short on results, Trudeau will have to decide if he continues to place his bets on Biden, or if he feels he has to take an independent stance and start pushing back."

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